

SPC Nicole Sarkisian



Pvt. Shane Brown of the 3rd Battalion, Royal Australian Regiment, uses a rope to climb over an obstacle during the joint U.S.-Australian training exercise Tandem Thrust '01.

Rockhampton, Australia

U.S., Australian Forces Train Down Under

ARMY units from throughout the Pacific region deployed in support of Tandem Thrust '01, a Joint Chiefs of Staff and U.S. Pacific Command-sponsored training exercise conducted in Australia's Shoalwater Bay Training Area in May.

First conducted on the southern coast of California in 1992, Tandem Thrust has evolved into a complex combined-joint exercise conducted once every two years, incorporating air, sea and land elements of the U.S. and Australian militaries.

The 1st Battalion, 501st Infantry Regiment, from Fort Richardson, Alaska, was the

largest U.S. Army player in this year's exercise. The unit worked with Australia's 3rd Bn., Royal Australian Regiment, in the week prior to the formal field training exercise.

MAJ Bryan Hilferty, spokesman for U.S. Army, Alaska, said USARAK's participation "demonstrated our ability to rapidly deploy our airborne battalion as part of joint-combined operations in a small-scale contingency. Our goal was to improve readiness and interoperability, and to increase security within the Asia-Pacific region."

MAJ Mark Meadows, 1st Bn., 501st operations officer, said this year's training was an important opportunity for his paratroopers to learn from their Australian counterparts.

"The training allowed us to

practice in our area of operations and interact with other airborne units, and it provided us a great opportunity to execute a combined airborne operation," Meadows said.

The Alaska unit flew from Hawaii on May 4 and conducted a combat jump into Australia's Singleton drop zone on May 5. The American paratroopers then spent a week preparing for the FTX and training with the Australians.

"It's a lot of fun jumping into a foreign country," said SPC Jose Sandoval of the initial jump on May 5. "There's nothing like it."

The highlight of the first week's training was the combined squad competition, which consisted of U.S. and Australian teams traversing a 1.5 mile, densely forested course filled with water impediments and man-made barriers.

"The opportunity to go through an obstacle course that is not available to us back at Fort Richardson was real challenging," said SPC Charles Raby, a 60mm mortarman. "I

got the chance to help a teammate I normally wouldn't have had in my team."

Raby said the toughest obstacle, and most satisfying part, was helping an "injured" teammate scale a 14-foot wall.

"Their obstacle course requires an enormous amount of upper-body strength," said SPC Matthew Stuver. "The Aussies are in great shape. They knew what they were doing out there, and it motivated us the whole time."

Following the course, the soldiers conducted a 4-mile march and ended the day with a squad live-fire range competition.

The challenge of operating in the harsh yet often delicate Australian environment was of concern to this year's exercise planners. Safety concerns and ensuring protection of the environment had to be balanced with training objectives, and so were part of the planning sessions from the beginning, said the Royal Australian Navy's Lt. Cmdr. David Waldie.

"Special safety working

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Soldiers from the Fort Richardson, Alaska-based 1st Battalion, 501st Infantry Regiment, use teamwork to get through another of the obstacles on the densely forested course.

groups made concerted efforts to ensure everyone was thoroughly trained and briefed on safety and environmental considerations before the exercise began," he said.

This is the third time Tandem Thrust has been held in this form as a combined task-force exercise in Australia. Participants in TT '01 included 15,000 U.S. Navy, Army, Air Force and Marine personnel, and 12,000 members of the Australian defense forces.

The combined forces were divided into "Blue" forces, composed of U.S. and Australian units, and an opposing "Orange" force, which included U.S., Australian and Canadian elements.

The realism provided had real-world implications, Sandoval said.

"One day we might have to jump and fight together for real, so it's important to know each others' standards," he said. — *Tandem Thrust 2001 Combined Joint Information Bureau*



SFC Nicole Sarkisian

A mixed U.S.-Australian squad negotiates the third of 20 obstacles at Australia's Holsworthy Barracks. Some 12,000 members of the Australian defense forces participated in Tandem Thrust '01.

Kaiserslautern, Germany

JAG Competition Showcases Soldier Skills

FORGET all the lawyer jokes you've heard. The 21st Theater Support Command's Office of the Staff Judge Advocate's "Iron JAG" competition demon-

strated that Army attorneys and paralegals have the right stuff to bring to the battlefield — soldier-style.

Iron JAG is a grueling set of events, including a 400-meter relay swim, a field march with full combat load, a modified PT test, an operational law exam, a cross-country run, and tests

on common-task training and JAG mission-essential tasks.

The organizer of this year's Iron JAG, SGM Mike Broady, used his experience from a previous assignment with a ranger regiment to create a competition to reinforce the standard CTT, JAG METL and physical training that is conducted at unit level.

The 11-hour competition tested attorneys and enlisted paralegals on all facets of their missions, promoting the JAG team concept and validating and evaluating JAG training.

"The competitors happen to be lawyers, legal NCOs and legal specialists, but they're always soldiers first and they have to maintain those soldier skills," said MG John D. Altenburg, the assistant judge advocate general. "That's why we want to push this so hard."

NCOs at individual law centers throughout U.S. Army, Europe, independently trained their soldiers in annual CTT tasks and specific JAG METL tasks, then team members trained each other. Enlisted soldiers trained their officer partners in CTT, and the attorneys trained their paralegals in battlefield law to prepare for the difficult operational law test.

"The operational law test is unique," said Broady. "It's based on rules of engagement, the laws of land warfare, the Hague and Geneva conventions, collateral claims damage and other issues that JAG teams could encounter on the battlefield."

The competition was so fierce that a winning team did not emerge until the last event. The first place trophy was captured by the 1st Infantry Division's team number 4, CPT Joseph Ratermann and PFC Michael Rea. Second place went to CPT John Hyatt and SGT Stephen Newsome, also of the 1st Inf. Div. The 21st TSC team of CPT Robert Borcharding and SSG Geriberto Dragon placed third. — LTC Deana Willis



LTC Deana Willis

SFC Diane James grades SPC Jennifer Roper's abdominal crunches during the 21st Theater Support Command's "Iron Jag" competition.